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BASEBALL

Rebels open preseason practice

JOSHUA CLAYTON
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The Ole Miss baseball team took the field to officially start preparing for the 2020 season on Friday afternoon.

Ranked No. 18 in the Perfect Game preseason rankings, the Rebels will enter the season with post-season aspirations after falling to Arkansas in the Fayetteville Super Regional last summer.

Making it to the tournament will not be an easy task with one of the toughest schedules in the country and having to replace the firepower from the top-rated recruiting class of 2016. The Rebels lost established starters Thomas Dillard, Cooper Johnson, Grae Kessinger, Cole Zabowski, Will Ethridge, Ryan Olenek and Parker Caracci.

The loss of that much production in the lineup, as well as a Friday starter and a shutdown closer, will surely be felt this season, but head coach Mike Bianco is confident he has plenty of talent to work with.

“There is a lot of new faces, but I think one of the things we forget is there’s fourteen returners,” Bianco said on Friday. “Fourteen guys that played a lot. Fourteen guys that played really well for us either last year or the last couple of years.”

The Rebels return preseason All-American third baseman Tyler Keenan and Anthony Servideo, who will move back to shortstop this season. Kevin Graham is back

SEE **BASEBALL** PAGE 5

On Kobe, life and death

(1978-2020)



PHOTO COURTESY: KEITH ALLISON VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS
ILLUSTRATION: KATHRINE BUTLER / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

COLUMN

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In a 2016 interview, conducted just months after he hung up his sneakers for the final time, Kobe Bryant was asked about death.

“What’s your relationship with death?” The Ringer’s Micah Peters asked.

“A comfortable one,” Bryant responded. “It’s an understanding. You can’t have life without death. You can’t have light without dark, so it’s an acceptance of that.” However, as one might expect, Bryant related the remainder of his response back to basketball.

“When it came down to whether or not I should retire, it’s really an acceptance of that mortality that all athletes face,” he continued. “If you combat it, you’ll always have that inner struggle within yourself.”

On Sunday afternoon, the Los Angeles Police Department confirmed the unimaginable; Bryant, 41, and his daughter Gianna, 13, died in a helicopter crash that morning in Calabasas, Calif., alongside seven others.

His death is as jarring as it is tragic. Bryant, one of the most devastating, jaw-droppingly talented and graceful players to ever pick up a basketball, was not supposed to die this young. He was supposed to mentor

the next generation of superstars. He was supposed to continue pushing women’s basketball forward. He was supposed to be a figure that children could grow up watching on television, asking their parents, ‘Who is this guy? What was it like when he played?’

But life is full of suppositions.

On the court, Bryant was unmatched in dominance. Over the course of a 20-year career – all spent in Los Angeles with the Lakers – Bryant won five championships, had 18 all-star selections and won league MVP in 2008. Bryant had 11 all-NBA first-team selections, nine first-team all-defense selections and scored

SEE **KOBE** PAGE 5



THE SUPPORTING CAST IS KEY FOR OLE MISS BASKETBALL

Breein Tyree is the engine for this Ole Miss squad, but the supporting cast is the key to long-term success this season.

SEE PAGE 4



NAVE GRAHAM OPENS 2020 FACULTY RECITAL SERIES

The first performance of the 2020 Faculty Recital Series brings new elements to the performance of classic pieces.

SEE PAGE 6

‘I want to make you have a good day’

Picasio Thompson shares his comedy through social media and open mics

CAROLINE NIHILL
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Every Tuesday night at Harrison’s around 7 p.m., comedians workshop their content in front of an audience. Senior and rising comedian Picasio Thompson entered the stage after a leap of faith.

Thompson grew up in close-knit Raleigh and fell in love with comedy at a young age. He said his father introduced him to humor-based programs like “King of the Hill” and “Chappelle’s Show.” It wasn’t until he was older that he started sharing his own content. Unafraid to step on toes, Thompson said that he enjoys pushing the envelope with his comedy.

“I am a black guy from Mississippi with opinions, and I want to make you have a good day,” Thompson said. “I’m going to talk about white people, black people, people of different ethnicities, different genders. I’m open to everything; it doesn’t matter. Nothing is off limits.”

Before performing his first show, he added that he was not completely confident in his jokes, but he quickly became comfortable in front of the crowd.

“It takes so much. Like you get on stage, (and) you have got to be funny,” Thompson said. “(A friend) told me to come watch her (do stand-up). I came and watched her. I was like, ‘I really want to do that.’ Then the next week I did it, (and) I went every single week. I was making new jokes, new materials (and) writing every constantly every day... It was so much fun.”

The weekly event hosts aspiring Oxford comedians and operates as an open mic. Thompson encourages others to watch the show, not only for his performance but for others as well. He uses social media to promote the show, but he also uses it as a comedic platform.

“Twitter’s everything. It is fast... I just feel free,” Thompson said. “I just get on there. I’m not worried about what’s going on here or there. I’ll just say whatever I want. I don’t really care if it’s funny or not. I’ll just say what I want to say. I just say whatever’s on my mind.”

In the past, Thompson said he has gotten negative feedback on his jokes. Often, the criticism will come from when he makes jokes about topics such as race and gender. He said that comedy unites people and is a way for people to open themselves up to new expressions.

“You have to know where you set yourself, your boundaries,” Thompson said. “Personally, I don’t let other people’s boundaries get in my way. Just because somebody else doesn’t feel comfortable talking about a situation doesn’t mean I don’t. I’ll say whatever I want.”

Thompson expressed that all of the crowds he sees are filled with diverse people, including himself.

He shared an experience with hearing a political joke being met with criticism and said he felt that open mics are a way for creatives to workshop their content.

“When somebody’s doing their bit, let them work it out,” Thompson said. “It’s also an open mic. It’s not perfect, (and) we’re here to work it out.”

Though following his passion into a comedy career is his dream, Thompson said he loves speaking with others and doing work with communications. He currently does marketing work with Uncommon Oxford apartments.

Along with his consistent performances, Thompson is collaborating with friends Keenan Hardrick and Deterris Fox for a new podcast called “Odd Ballz,” that will be available on streaming services this week.



BILLY SCHUERMAN / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

After seeing his friend perform stand-up comedy, Picasio Thompson began writing his own jokes and working toward perfecting his craft every day. Now, Thompson performs weekly on Tuesdays at Oxford Comedy.



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Medical marijuana makes 2020 state ballot

HADLEY HITSON
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On Nov. 3, Mississippi residents will have the opportunity to vote on the legalization of medical marijuana. Ballot Initiative 65, if passed by voters, would amend the state constitution to provide a program under the Mississippi Department of Health that would allow citizens with “debilitating conditions,” such as cancer, epilepsy and more than 20 other defined conditions, to obtain medical marijuana.

The Medical Marijuana 2020 campaign, based in Ridgeland and sponsored by the Mississippians for Compassionate Care political group, started the petition for the amendment in July of 2018 after the Mississippi Secretary of State and Mississippi Attorney General’s office approved

the ballot initiative.

The completed petitions were submitted on Sept. 4, and over four months later, on Jan. 8, the Mississippi Secretary of State’s office confirmed that the petition had generated enough certified signatures to qualify for placement on the ballot.

Mississippians for Compassionate Care needed to turn in 17,237 signatures from each of the five congressional districts, for a total of 86,185. Ultimately, they had over 105,000 signatures accredited.

In a previous interview with The Daily Mississippian, Jamie Grantham, Medical Marijuana 2020’s communications director, said, “We looked at other states, studied programs, people who implicated programs, as well as patients. It was really helpful to us, especially when the language was being drafted.”

The campaign’s proposed

amendment specifies that no patient could possess more than 2.5 ounces of medical marijuana at one time, and no more than that amount could be provided in a span of 14 days. Additionally, no marijuana treatment center would be allowed to be located within 500 feet of a school, church or child care establishments.

The state legislature now has until May to review, amend, adopt or reject the initiative prior to the state’s next general election. If legislators decide to amend the language, though, both the original and amended versions of the initiative will appear on the ballot, according to Section 23-17-29 of the Mississippi Code Annotated. This section of code also dictates that the initiative must receive over 40% of the total votes cast in the election.

Director of Pharmacy Health Services Sandy Bent-

ley said in a prior interview with The Daily Mississippian that every medication has some kind of risk, even when prescribed by a doctor. She said that the reason doctors prescribe the medication is that the benefits outweigh the risks. Medical marijuana is no different.

“There has to be a case-by-case basis on how to judge medical marijuana,” Bentley said. “I don’t think you can have a blanket policy for it.”

Still, the Mississippi Board of Health expressed its “strong opposition” to the initiative on account of the “numerous known harms from the use of cannabis products including addiction, mental illness, increased accidents, and smoking related harms.” The board voted on the resolution against the Medical Marijuana 2020 initiative earlier this month.

Online program nationally ranked

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The University of Mississippi’s online Master of Business Administration program has been named one of the top programs in the nation by U.S. News and World Report.

Ole Miss is in a three-way tie for No. 4 among public universities with Pennsylvania State University and the University of Texas at Dallas, and ranked No. 6 overall. The University of Florida and Auburn University are the only other SEC schools in the top 20.


For the 2020 edition, U.S. News ranked online MBA programs using five categories: engagement, expert opinion, faculty credentials and training, student excellence and student services and technology.

Ole Miss’ online MBA program is a 36 credit hour program that can be completed in two years by taking two courses per semester. Students aren’t required to be on campus and aren’t charged non-resident fees.

The Ole Miss online MBA program is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, which is considered the gold standard for business school accreditation.

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BASKETBALL

The supporting cast is the key for Ole Miss basketball

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Just about everything went right for the Ole Miss basketball team on Saturday night.

Though it has been a forgettable opening stretch in SEC play for the Rebels, but the team pulled out at the 70-60 win over top-draft prospect Anthony Edwards and the Georgia Bulldogs in Athens.

The Rebels showed their most complete performance of the year as it seemed every player on the roster was locked in to their specific role.

Head coach Kermit Davis said it was only a matter of time before the Rebels broke through for their first conference win.

“We’ve always come into the gym in a good mood. Our team has played well. We

haven’t tried to overdrive them and go to two-and-a-half-hour practices,” Davis said after the game. “We’ve just tried to work on things that we needed to, and today Khadim Sy (looked) like the guy we signed, and then obviously Breein Tyree was so terrific, but (this was) a much needed win for us.”

Khadim Sy had turned in his most impressive performance in an Ole Miss uniform with 16 points and four rebounds on 50% shooting from the field and one 3-three pointer. Sy showed a steady presence and physicality in the paint on both sides of the ball in his 28 minutes of play, which is something that’s been missing as of late.

Sy has been up and down all season, but consistently mostly down during SEC play scoring three, eight, 10, and two in his previous SEC games and missing

the trip to Florida for disciplinary reasons, but the center impressed in this game with several hustle plays resulting in buckets, extra possessions, trips to the line on offense and turnovers on defense.

Head coach Kermit Davis said it was only a matter of time before the Rebels broke through for their first conference win.

“We’ve always come into the gym in a good mood. Our team has played well., Wwe haven’t tried to overdrive them and go to two- and- a- half-hour practices,” head coach Kermit Davis said after the game. “We’ve just tried to work on things that we needed to, a. And today Khadim Sy (looked) like the guy we signed, and then obviously Breein Tyree was so terrific, but (this was) a much needed win for us.”

The supporting cast stepped up in a big way in the victory, but it was still undoubtedly the Tyree show. The senior poured in 20 points, four rebounds and four assists, looking like he could get any shot he wanted to score at any level on the court.

“I’ve talked to Breein a lot. We’ve had a lot of discussions about being a good player without the ball in your



FILE PHOTO: REED JONES / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Khadim Sy shooting a free throw against Western Michigan earlier this season. Sy totaled 16 points in the 70-60 win over Georgia on Saturday.

hands,” Davis said. “I mean obviously he can go score it, but I thought tonight he made some basketball IQ plays. I thought he made some really good plays defensively.”

The Rebels operated efficiently with Tyree on the court, and it was obvious the SEC’s leading scorer was more and more comfortable as the game went on.

Tyree was able to weave through the defense to score or dish it off to a teammate on the perimeter or under the basket. K.J. Buffen added 14 points, Blake Hinson had nine and Bryce Williams went 2-3 on 3-point shots on his way to eight points.

“(Tyree’s) one of the very best guards in college basketball, and tonight we got him some help. If we get him a little help with a second and third scorer, then our team can compete with anyone in the SEC.”

Offensive production like that along with tight defense (Ole Miss held Georgia to 30.9% shooting) could lead to sustainable success over the rest of the season, but that’s easier said than done with No. 16 Auburn visiting Oxford on Tuesday.

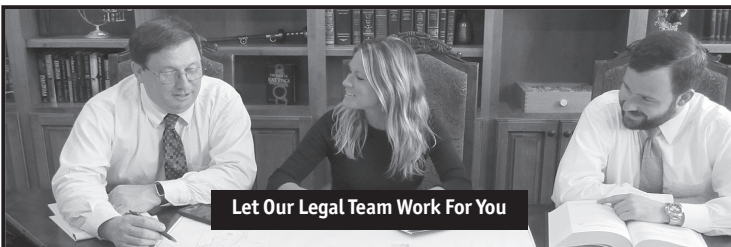


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BASEBALL

continued from page 1

in the outfield after an impressive performance at the end of last season.

On the mound, they'll start fan-favorite Doug Nikhazy and Gunnar Hoglund, who filled the Sunday starting role.

"It means a lot," Servideo said. "It's my turn, you know. My first two years, I've been looking up to the other guys: Grae (Kessinger), (Olenek), (Dillard). So now it's my turn to do my job — to be successful for the guys in the future (and) to be able to fill in that role when they need to."

The rest will depend on the many new faces, including the No. 2 recruiting class in the nation.

"Fall was good for a handful of those new guys. I don't think it's a secret that we'll need some of those new guys to contribute this year, and



PHOTOS: REED JONES / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN
ILLUSTRATION: KATHRINE BUTLER / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

I think certainly they will," Bianco said.

Freshman pitcher Derek Diamond has impressed so far as he is expected to contrib-

ute to innings immediately. Nikhazy raved about his teammate before Friday's practice.

"(Diamond)'s a stud in his own regard. He comes to the

field to work. He's just a great guy to be around (and) brings so much energy, and I think wherever he ends up, he's going to be so good in whatever he

does. e really is a good guy on the field and off the field and really brings it when he gets on the mound, too."

A few freshmen field players have also performed well in the two intrasquad scrimmages on Saturday and Sunday. Jerrión Ealy went 2-3 on Saturday, and Trey LaFleur hit two 400-foot homers on Sunday. Peyton Chatagnier also made a few impressive plays in the infield.

The Rebels will open the season with a series against Louisville at Swayze Field on Feb. 14, but the Rebels are already working to prepare for the No. 1 team in the preseason polls.

"I love looking ahead and just trying to be prepared always. I've already started looking at film trying to make sure I know how everything's going to be," Nikhazy said. "I played with a couple of guys on the team this past summer, so we're always jawing off to each other whenever we can. I'm certainly excited for it."

KOBE

continued from page 1

the fourth-most points in NBA history. He also won two gold medals in the 2008 and 2012 Olympic games.

He entered the league in 1996, a pioneer in the push for high school basketball players to forego college and enter the NBA. He came into the league at a time of flux; Magic Johnson and Larry Bird were gone, and Michael Jordan's twilight was slowly approaching. The league needed a new face, and Bryant fit it as if the mold was cast specifically for him.

He was a giant among men. He belonged to a special fraternity of individuals who transcended their occupation — of those whose legacies span countries, generations and time. He was the most influential sports figure in 21st-century American culture.

He was your favorite player's favorite player. Tales of his commitment to perfection are unmatched, and his 'Mamba mentality' inspired millions of young boys and girls to go outside and pick up a basketball. But Bryant's gospel transcends basketball. The determination, hard work and self-sacrifice he employed throughout his life are teachable in any field and in any discipline.

He left an indelible mark on the global landscape of the sport, and in this country, no other figure impacted American culture more than Bryant. His shoes, his signature fade away jump shot, his support of the women's game and his contributions to cinema — for which he was awarded an Oscar in 2018 — will likely never be matched.

Perhaps the greatest indication of Bryant's brilliance came

on April 13, 2016, his final game. In front of a sold-out Staples Center, the millions watching expected a veteran's coronation; he would trot out onto the court, knock down a few shots and receive a hero's farewell. Instead, Bryant delivered one of the most iconic performances of his career. He poured in 60 points, including the game-winning jumper, on two legs that the thousands of hours of physical wear had finally caught up to.

Following the game, Kobe addressed the Staples Center crowd; true fans didn't dare to leave the arena. He thanked them for years of support, joked about years the Lakers struggles and, before bidding farewell, put his hand over his heart, two fingers in the air and exclaimed, "Mamba out."

But the Mamba, as Bryant was known, did not leave; his second chapter had just begun. And that's what makes his untimely death so hard to process.

I never met Kobe Bryant, and I imagine that you never did, either. That doesn't mean his death hurts any less.

It's okay to mourn the death of those that we never knew. It's okay to cry about the death of your favorite musician, actor or political figure; these actions make us human. These individuals, those who we choose to give a little piece of our faith, or our love, or hours of our time, possess something we desire. While they never knew it, these celebrities we choose to mourn are part of our lives.

Death is undefeated. It is unexpected and unforgiving, and serves as a reminder of our own mortality. On Sunday morning, Bryant's wife Vanessa lost a husband, and three of his daughters lost a father and a sister. The world lost a disciple of sport and an inspiration to the masses.



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Flutist opens 2020 faculty recital series

ANNABELLE HARRIS
thedmfeatures@gmail.com

Flutist Nave Graham and pianist Adrienne Park played the first performance of the Faculty Recital Series of 2020 on Friday. Graham performed four pieces of varied style in this show.

The recital opened with “Court Dances” by Amanda Harberg, a three-movement suite for flute and piano that was commissioned by a consortium of 57 flutists.

Graham said she was excited to share this piece with the audience because of the composer.

“I am very passionate about female composers, especially this one,” Graham said. “I have worked with her several times at the Interlochen Arts Camp.”

Vocal coach Amanda Johnston joined the two musicians for the second

piece, “Bilitis: Six épigraphes antiques” by Claude Debussy.

This piece had six short movements each based on a poem from Pierre Louÿs’ “Les Chansons de Bilitis.”

Graham said she felt like the poems were important to the piece because they were Debussy’s inspiration, even though there were 143 in “Les Chansons de Bilitis.” The arrangement Graham played pulled from the original score written in 1901, which was never published.

“For me, the poems served as inspiration to tell me how to play the piece,” Graham said.

Johnston read each poem in French before Graham and Park performed that section of the piece.

Tyler Hewett, a music major and saxophonist, said he was moved by their performance.

“There was a very good, very ancient feeling to it,”



MASON SCIONEUX / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

The UM Music Department opened its Faculty Recital Series 2020 on Friday night at the Nutt Auditorium. Flutist Nave Graham and pianist Adrienne Park, both instructors at Ole Miss, performed a variety of works as a duo, including Debussy’s “Six épigraphes antiques,” which was accompanied by French poetry.

Hewett said. “I think the flute really captured that well. Amanda Johnston doing the French (poems) just added a whole other layer of musicality and meaning to it. It was very original, something I haven’t seen from any other recital.”

The third piece was titled “Coltrane,” by David Heath. Arranged for solo flute, the piece was inspired by the jazz of saxophonist and composer

John Coltrane. It also used Tala rhythms from Indian music, like much of Coltrane’s work.

The final piece of the night was “Chant de Linos” by André Jolivet. It was inspired by ancient Greek mourning practices and is comprised of laments, hysterics and dances.

Jolivet is one of Graham’s favorite composers because of how technically difficult his

pieces are, especially “Chant de Linos,” she said.

“This piece has a magic mysticism to it,” Graham said.

Flutist Jiwon Lee, a graduate student studying music, said she enjoyed how technical the piece was.

“This piece showed a lot of different techniques and stylistic differences between all the sections,” Lee said. “It was the most interesting piece out of all of them.”

She also said she was impressed thoroughly by the recital.

“The variety of program — different styles and genres — was very unique,” Lee said. “There was a little bit of every period of music. It engaged the audience and gave an exciting feel.”

The Faculty Recital Series continues at 7:30 p.m. on Feb. 9 with a performance by Graham, Park and oboist and instructor of music Austin Smith.

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ACROSS

1- Pertaining to the small intestine;
6- Kansas city;
10- Gives a bad review;
14- Water wheel;
15- Boxer Max;
16- Shamu, for one;
17- Typical instance;
20- Frat letters;
21- Taco topper;
22- "Stay" singer Lisa;
26- Dreamer's opposite;
30- Inadequate;
34- Took home;
35- Winter ailment;
36- ___ Marie Saint;
38- Humble;
39- Vardalos of "My Big Fat Greek Wedding";
40- "See ya!";
42- Mus. slow-up;
43- Seed of a legume;
44- House in D.C.;
45- Unexplored land;
49- Summit of an earthy mound;
50- Pub orders;
51- Clogs, e.g.;
54- Came down with;
56- V;

DOWN

1- Like Bruckner's Symphony No. 7;
2- Bagel topper;
3- Able was I ___ I saw Elba;
4- Intention;
5- ___ Crunch;
6- Nile waders;
7- Idiot;
8- Circle of flowers;
9- Curve;
10- Edible tuber;
11- Seed cover;
12- Sgts., e.g.;
13- Yemen's capital;
18- Sensational;
19- Kind of prof.;
22- Pertaining to the moon;
23- In the least;
24- Fancy home;
25- Cave dwellers;
27- Person who makes an affidavit;
47- Stand;

64- Nabisco cookie;
65- Manitoba Indigenous People;
66- Coherent light beam;
67- Old despot;
68- In the sack;
69- Atty.-to-be exams;

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A	N	I	V	A	R			S	P	E	T		
P	O	T		V	M	E	D	E	I	I	R	O	T
S	B	G	H		H	O	C	I	S	S	R	O	N
T	S	U			M	W	L	O	N	A	V	C	E

28- Singer's syllables;
29- Hosp. area;
31- Golf ball prop;
32- Sell directly to the consumer;
33- Actress Mimieux;
37- Zones;
39- Sedaka or Simon;
40- Lower limb;
41- Author Sewell;
43- Chum;
44- Deep sleep;
46- Daniel Webster, e.g.;
47- Stand;

48- Equipped with pinions;
51- ___-free;
52- "His and ___";
53- ___-Day vitamins;
55- Lofty;
57- Nipper's co.;
58- Heavenly body;
59- Sum charged;
60- Anatomical duct;
61- This ___ test...;
62- Offensive time?;
63- Decade divs.;

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7			2	4	6		9
	3		1	8		7	5
		4			3	2	1
5		6	7				
			4		3		
			9		7		4
4	7	2			9		
8	5		4	7		1	
9		1	8	3			7

HOW TO PLAY
Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 with no repeats.
DIFFICULTY LEVEL

INTERMEDIATE

7	4	5	2	3	8	1	9	6
9	1	2	7	4	6	3	5	8
8	3	6	5	1	9	2	7	4
4	9	7	1	6	5	8	2	3
2	5	8	3	9	4	7	6	1
3	6	1	8	7	2	9	4	5
1	2	3	6	5	7	4	8	9
5	7	4	9	8	1	6	3	2
6	8	6	4	2	3	5	1	7

OPINION

Bloomberg could win Mississippi

KATIE DAMES
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Mike Bloomberg, billionaire businessman and former mayor of New York City, has refused financial support for his 2020 bid for the Democratic nomination, leaving him without donors and without clear support from voters. Senator Bernie Sanders, another Democratic presidential candidate, argued that “If you can’t build grassroots support for your candidacy, you have no business running for president.” Even if Bloomberg isn’t amassing the same public support and donations as Sanders, Bloomberg’s strategies are already convincing voters, including Mississippians, to consider him for the Democrartic nomination for the presidency. I will not be voting for Mike Bloomberg, but I believe he has a strong chance of winning over Mississippi Democrats.

Perhaps the most convincing reason to support or at least like

Bloomberg comes from the fact that he has pledged to financially support the Democratic nominee, even if it is not him. Even if he doesn’t win Mississippi, there’s still an incentive for people to work on his campaign because regardless of who the nominee is, it means they’ll be on Bloomberg’s paycheck until November. Not only will they have ten months’ of job security, but state-level leaders on the Bloomberg campaign are paid \$6,000 per month. In a state where the annual median household income is \$44,717 a month, Bloomberg’s campaign salary is exciting for any person who’s politically-inclined and shares Bloomberg’s goal of getting Trump out of office.

Bloomberg has the funds to campaign in the states most candidates would judge as too risky to invest time and resources in, such as Mississippi, and he also has a history of garnering support from both sides of the aisle. Bloomberg was a life-long Democrat until he registered for the Republican party a year

before his first bid for the mayoral office of New York City. In 2000, the year when he was elected, there were five times as many Democrats in New York as there were Republicans. Although Bloomberg’s change in party affiliation may appear as a sign of disloyalty to either party, wwthe fact that he could capture a Republican stronghold in such a liberal-leaning electorate suggests that perhaps he could do the same in Mississippi. His ties with the Republican party might just get him votes in a state that hasn’t turned blue in an electoral college vote since Jimmy Carter won the presidency in 1976.

In terms of his policies, Bloomberg has prioritized economic and racial justice. For example, in his Greenwood Initiative, which launched at the beginning of the new year,. Bloomberg hopes “to help create generational wealth for Black Americans, drive economic empowerment and close the economic gap between white and black Americans” by investing

\$70 billion in 100 disadvantaged communities in the U.S. to increase black home ownership. Considering Mississippi’s rank as the state with the ninth-worst income inequality, Bloomberg’s policies could strongly appeal to those looking to reduce historical racial discrimination and barriers to economic advancement within the state.

Criminal justice reform is especially on the minds of Mississippians following the reveal of abuses at the Mississippi State Penitentiary, also known as Parchman prison. Eight people have died at Parchman since the start of the new decade, and Mississippians are seeking reform to reduce the violence and human rights violations occurring within the prison system. Bloomberg’s criminal justice track record is marred by his stop-and-frisk policy that targeted half a million young men of color each year, a fact he is well aware of. While visiting Jackson, he apologized during a closed conversation at the Smith Robertson Museum and

Cultural Center about criminal justice reform.

If the 2020 presidential race comes down to Bloomberg and Trump, we will have to choose between two candidates who are old, white, elite New York men, bringing one of the most diverse fields of presidential candidates to a standoff between, at a surface-level, very similar candidates. However, Bloomberg has targeted his policies to appeal to Southern Democrats and acquired a well-paid team with resources. He has the “electability” quotient to win the Democratic nomination and because of his ability to wo appeal to both parties, he has the potential to beat the incumbent president. Bloomberg’s campaign sounds like a joke to some, but when it comes to electing a billionaire to the presidency, stranger things have happened.

Katie Dames is a junior international studies major from St. Louis, Missouri.

To do more, the Mississippi legislature should do less

JON PRITCHETT
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The new year brought a new legislative session to Jackson. It also brought new estimates from the Census Bureau on Mississippi’s population.

For the fourth time in five years, Mississippi lost population. The state’s population declined by 4,871 people, the sixth highest total in the country. Mississippi and neighboring Louisiana, which saw a decrease of 10,896 residents, are the only states in the South to lose population over the past year. This is a continuing trend.

A look at a map of domestic migration, which measures where Americans are moving over the past year, shows a picture of the haves and the have-nots when it comes to population growth.

Large swaths of the Northeast and Midwest show a declining population, while the interior west, West Coast (except California) and the Southeast saw population gains — substantial gains in some states.

So what can we do to join our Southern neighbors?

We may look at Mississippi and say things like, “We don’t

have any cool, large cities today that people want to move to.” Honestly, were Salt Lake City, Raleigh or Nashville that cool 30 years ago? They certainly looked and performed very differently than they do today.

People moved to those places because of opportunity, and they made them cool. There are policies that the state can adopt that would put Mississippi ahead of the curve when it comes to national policy and position and for the state to be competitive nationwide.

For starters, Mississippi needs to move away from a desire to overregulate commerce and embolden government bureaucrats. Mississippi has more than 117,000 regulations that cut across every sector of the economy. A successful model to stem this growing tide would be a one-in, two-out policy where for every new regulation that is adopted, two have to be removed. If a regulatory policy is so important, make the government prove it.

The Trump administration adopted a similar executive order in 2017, and the numbers show we are actually seeing decreases greater than two-to-one.

This could be particularly beneficial in healthcare and tech policy. No department regulates more than the

Department of Health, but our goal should be a push toward free market healthcare reforms that encourage choice and competition. Certificate of Need reform would be a good place to start.

In tech policy, the state has the opportunity to be one of the first states to essentially open the door for innovation, rather than one where entrepreneurs need to seek permission from the state. If Mississippi wants to get in the technology world, and we are convinced this is essential, a permissionless innovation policy in healthcare would be a big step in the right direction.

We need to continue to reform our occupational licensing requirements. This includes providing universal recognition of licensing, following the path paved by Arizona. If you have been licensed in one state, that license should be good in Mississippi. Again, we could lead on an issue that would be particularly beneficial to military families.

Our current licensing regime serves to lower competition and increase costs for consumers, while not providing those consumers with a better product. Occupational licensing is an example of how Mississippi misses the opportunity to grow her economy by acting in

defensive ways to protect the slices of our economic pie for the well-connected when the reality is we could create a much bigger economic pie if we encouraged more creative disruption, competition and risk-taking.

Finally, Mississippi needs to shed its abundant reliance on government and the public sector. Whether for public assistance, grants, contracts, jobs or specific tax breaks, the citizens and companies in Mississippi are too dependent on state government. And the state is too dependent on the federal government. We have the third highest level of economic dependence on federal grants-in-aid in the nation (43%) and the fourth highest level of our economy driven by the public sector in the country (55%).

Politicians, state agency directors, and government bureaucrats cannot create the economic growth we need. They can, however, work together with our various representatives

and create an environment that allows and encourages private economic activities. Ultimately, with such an environment, it will be the entrepreneurs, business owners, productive workers, creative disruptors, capitalists, managers and consumers who deliver the economic growth we all seek.

There’s no rule that Mississippi has to lose population. Alabama, with whom we share much in common, had a domestic migration growth that ranked 18th in the country last year. We’d celebrate that. Some will look at Mississippi’s woes and say the problem is that government doesn’t do enough. As the success of our neighbors shows, that couldn’t be further from the truth.

Jon Pritchett is the President and CEO of Mississippi Center for Public Policy.

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